INCIDENT AT ABERDEEN

A Case Study

TRADOC PRE COMMAND COURSE

"A CRITICAL SELF EXAMINATION"

It is important for everyone to underst
that this was not an isolated incident
Aberdeen. Other installations, such as
Jackson and Fort Leonard Wood also h
similar incidents on going at the same
Just not as large or in the media spotl

"A CRITICAL SELF EXAMINATION"

- In November 1996, allegations of widespread sexual misconduct involving AIT Drill Sergeants and Cadre members of the U.S. Army Ordnance Center and School in Aberdeen, MD were brought to America's attention

- Legal actions, investigations, reviews and assessments determined the facts and recommended corrective actions

WHERE WERE WE?

Our Army

- Completing downsizing in 1996
  - Cuts to personnel (training and support)
  - Cuts to resources
  - Leaders' split focus
- Increasing gender integration
  - More sexual harassment "opportunities"
- Drill Sergeant duty not attractive
  - Viewed as "*not career enhancing*"
- EO programs not fully resourced

WHERE WERE WE?

Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD

- 28% of personnel authorizations lost
- Installation command split focus
  - Training, doctrine, materiel & combat developments were “main effort”
- IET resources used to support other installation requirements (lack of emphasis on IET) - “bill payer”
- CG responsible for 10 different geographic locations
- Individual training “going well”

WHERE WERE WE?
143d Ordnance Battalion (AIT)

- **Split leader focus**
  - **Individual training, platform instruction, POI / doctrine development**
- **Personnel shortages**
  - **No Chaplain assigned to battalion**
  - **A Co missing Co XO *and* Training NCO**
  - **Drill Sergeant shortages (DS/Soldier >1:60)**
- **Some cases of DS improper behavior**
  - **One DS “removed from trail” for “inappropriate touching”; and other cases**

WHERE WERE WE?
143d Ordnance Battalion (AIT)

- High number of "holdover" soldiers
  - Awaiting medical or security clearances
  - Soldiers performing several details
  - Minimal "formal duties" - soldiers "bored"
  - Unclear status; uneven policy enforcement
- 143d OD Bn located 12 miles from APG at Edgewood Arsenal
- Bn Commander / CSM had *significant* administrative requirements

WHAT HAPPENED?
The Events

- **Early September 1996 - Female Private reports DS (SSG), (C/143 OD) sexually assaulted her**
- **Other Female Private alleged Co Cdr (A/143 OD) abused her within a *sexual relationship***
- **Numerous allegations followed; APG initiated investigation with CID**
- **Department of the Army releases information to public on 7 November**

WHAT HAPPENED?
The Events

- ***Toll-free hotline*** **established to receive reports of misconduct and abuse**
  - **(Hotline active through June 1997)**
- **Over 101 incidents of abuse at APG reported via hotline in first two weeks**
- **Numerous cases of relationships and "consensual sex" reported in 143 OD Battalion**
- **Investigations continue; 12 cadre members charged by April 1997**

WHAT HAPPENED?
The Allegations

- ***SSG S*** - 54 counts including forcible rape, sodomy, adultery
- ***CPT R*** - rape, improper relationship, disobeying lawful order
- ***SFC B*** - sodomy and adultery
- ***SSG B*** - improper relationships, obstructing justice, disobeying lawful order
- ***SFC J*** - improper relationships, drunk on duty
- ***SFC C*** - sodomy, adultery, improper relationships
- ***SSG G1*** - 17 counts sexual misconduct
- ***SSG G2*** - 32 counts misconduct

WHAT HAPPENED?
The Allegations

- **12 cadre members faced various charges from *rape* to *violation of orders***
- **Defense countered that sex was consensual**
  - ***SSG S admitted* to sex with 11 soldiers and propositioning additional 4 soldiers**
- **Courts Martial and administrative procedures initiated against accused**

WHAT HAPPENED?
The Results

- One conviction for rape - 25 years, reduction to E-1, dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay (*SSG S*)
- One conviction of fraternization, adultery, dereliction - 3 years
- Three convictions of sexual misconduct
- Four discharged in lieu of court martial
- Two field grade article 15's
- One cleared of sexual misconduct
- *A blemished, embarrassed Army*

WHY IT HAPPENED?
The Environment

- Extramarital "Consensual sex" was considered "OK" by some cadre
  - Informal competition between Drill Sergeants to "sleep with" trainees
- Company commander preyed on soldier who was reporting sexual harassment
  - Signaled "OK" to unit cadre
- Soldiers perceived misconduct was permissible to to gain favored treatment
- *Minimal leadership presence*

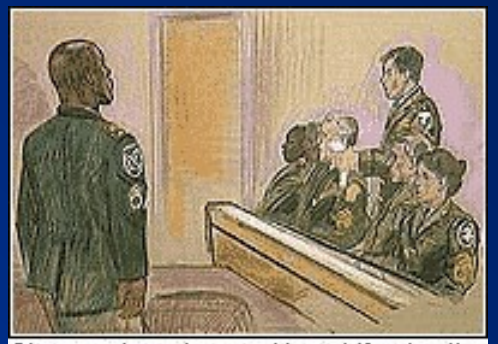
WHY IT HAPPENED?
The Conditions

- **Soldierization training not stressed**
- **Soldiers unaware of complaint procedures**
  - **over 60% unaware of IG or EOA roles**
- **Unprofessional behavior was *accepted***
  - **vulgar explicit language from cadre**
  - **flirting and violation of buddy system**
- **Holdover soldiers engaged in tobacco use and alcohol binge drinking**

WHY IT HAPPENED?
The Indicators

- **Blatant intimidation; instilled fear**
  - **DS inflicted a bruise "poking a soldier"**
- **Drill Sergeant "competitions"/ "codes"**
  - **"In the game" (= sleeping with trainees)**
  - **"Locked in tight" (= "willing" trainees)**
- **Disregard of policies / procedures**
  - **"Buddy system" violations**
  - **Selective enforcement of regulations**
  - **Vulgar language; negative leadership**

WHY IT HAPPENED?
The Results


Simpson showed no emotion while standing to hear his sentence Tuesday
(Sketch by Dana Verkouteren)

- ***Co Cdr*** **guilty of consensual sex with trainee, violation of regulations**
  - **Sentenced to 3 years confinement.**
- **DS *found guilty* of:**
  - **18 counts of rape, 11 counts of consensual sex, 5 counts of propositioning**
  - **Sentenced to 25 years confinement, reduction to E-1, forfeiture all pay, dishonorable discharge**
- **11 cadre - *careers ended***

COMMON THREADS
Findings

- **Individual (deliberate) abuse of authority**
  - **"Bad actors" *knew* they were wrong**
  - ***None* claimed they were "unaware"**
- **Inappropriate personal standards of conduct**
  - **Criminal behavior**
  - **Fraternization**
- **Non-enforcement of policies / standards**
- **Tolerance of sexual harassment**

COMMON THREADS
Findings

- **NCOs were not "self-policing"**
  - **instead unwilling to "rat" on buddy or *chose not to know* what was going on**
  - **stronger loyalty to peers than to institutional values**
  - **belief that misconduct can be handled without chain of command**
  - **a sense that "everyone is doing it" and offense is *not very serious***

WHERE WE ARE
"The Good News"

- **Emphasis on Values, Teamwork, Rigor and Discipline…added week to BCT**
- **Drill Sergeant Program strategies**
  - **Improved selection criteria / process**
  - **Incentives to attract/retain quality NCOs**
    - **SDAP and assignment processes**
  - **DS School reinforcing training, *not DS*, as the stressor**
- **Renewal of focus on IET**
  - **TRADOC DCG IET, Note 99-1**

WHERE WE ARE
"The Good News"

- **Commitment to manning**
  - **Chaplains and XOs (LTs) restored (54/110)**
  - **Drill Sergeant strength maintenance**
- **Consideration of Others program**
- **Command Climate survey**
  - **within 90 days and annually**
- **Revised TRADOC 350-6**
- **Leader Training (PCC / CTC /SCTC)**
- **Equal Opportunity Manning**

WHERE WE ARE
"The Good News"

- **Reinforcement of available complaint processes**
- **Sexual Assault / Rape Prevention education and handbook**
- **Zero tolerance of sexual harassment and misconduct**
- **Formalization of Army fraternization regulation / policies**

DRILL SERGEANTS

- **"The best Drill Sergeants are those who are really good soldiers, those who understand the fundamentals of leadership, that treat people with dignity and respect…but *Drill Sergeant* has to be something that comes from the heart… the *most important* thing is that they be *good soldiers*…"**

  - GEN Reimer, CSA, 1 Oct '97